

Message Text

PAGE 01 PANAMA 00766 062310Z

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S E C R E T PANAMA 0766

EXDIS

FOR S/S

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PN, OVIP (HENRY A. KISSINGER)

SUBJ: ATMOSPHERE PRIOR TO KISSINGER VISIT.

1. SUMMARY: A WARM FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE PREVAILS FOR THE SECRETARY'S VISIT. ALL PANAMANIAN AND U.S. SECURITY AGENCIES REPORT THE SITUATION IS EXPECTED TO BE CALM AND NO SIGNIFICANT SECURITY PROBLEMS ARE FORESEEN. GOP OFFICIALS ARE AWARE OF RISK THAT AFTER THE VISIT PUBLIC FRUSTRATION COULD SET IN IF IT IS NOT FOLLOWED BY TANGIBLE RESULTS, AND HAVE ATTEMPTED TO KEEP EXPECTATIONS WITHIN BOUNDS. NEVERTHELESS, HOPES ARE SOARING AND EVEN AMONG GOP OFFICIALS THERE IS CONTROLLED EUPHORIA CONCERNING THE VISIT. END SUMMARY.

2. SECURITY: ALL U.S. SECURITY AGENCIES REPORT THE SITUATION TO BE CALM, THAT THERE ARE NO SIGNIFICANT SECURITY PROBLEMS AND NO INDICATIONS THAT THERE WILL BE ANY DURING THE PERIOD OF THE VISIT. GOP INFORMS US IT EXPECTS SOME CROWDS AT AIRPORT AND LEGISLATIVE PALACE WHICH IT HAS TAKEN STEPS TO ASSURE WILL BE FRINDLY.

3. PUBLIC AND PRESS: THE GOP HAS CREATED A WARM AND FRIENDLY ATMOSPHERE FOR THE SECRETARY'S VISIT WHILE ATTEMPTING TO KEEP PUBLIC EXPECTATIONS CONCERNING THE

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SECRET

PAGE 02 PANAMA 00766 062310Z

RESULTS OF THE VISIT WITHIN REASONABLE BONDS. TO THIS END, THE FOREIGN MINISTER MET LAST FRIDAY WITH MEDIA REPRESENTATIVES TO SPELL OUT SPECIFICALLY THAT THE

PURPOSE OF THE VISIT IS TO SIGN AN AGREEMENT ON PRINCIPLES TO GUIDE FUTURE NEGOTIATIONS AND TO SQUELCH RUMORS THAT A TREATY WOULD BE SIGNED. GOP OFFICIALS ARE AWARE OF THE DANGER THAT UNLESS THE VISIT IS FOLLOWED CLOSELY BY SOME TANGIBLE RESULTS EITHER IN THE NEGOTIATIONS OR CONCESSIONS THAT A WAVE OF FRUSTRATION WILL SET IN. WHILE EDITORIAL COMMENT HAS ADHERED TO THE FOREIGN MINISTER'S THEME CLOSELY, THE HISTORICAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE VISIT, PLUS MUCH WISHFUL THINKING, HAVE CAUSED POPULAR EXPECTATIONS TO SOAR. FOREIGN MINISTER WILL HOLD PRESS CONFERENCE AT 8:00 P.M. FEBRUARY SEVENTH TO EXPLAIN THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AGREEMENT.

4. ATTITUDES OF OFFICIALS: WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT GROUP THERE IS HARDLY RESTRAINED EUPHORIA AND A HOPE THAT THE SECRETARY WILL WAVE A MAGIC WAND TO PRODUCE A NEW TREATY OR AT LEAST AGREEMENT ON ALL THE KEY ISSUES SO THAT ONE CAN BE WRITTEN PROMPTLY. PRESIDENT LAKAS, WHO HAS BEEN CRITICIZED AT TIMES FOR BEING TOO TRUSTING AND FRIENDLY TOWARD THE U.S., HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN TELLING PEOPLE THAT HIS FAITH IN AMERICANS IS BEING VINDICATED.

5. GOP APPROACH TO VISIT: TORRIJOS PLANS TO USE THE VISIT TO BOLSTER HIS POLITICAL POSITION IN PANAMA AND HIS STATURE IN THE HEMISPHERE. HE HAS IN RECENT WEEKS BEEN UNDER POLITICAL PRESSURE FROM CONSERVATIVES WHO ATTEMPTED TO USE THE TREATY NEGOTIATIONS AS A POLITICAL WEAPON AGAINST HIM BY IMPLYING THAT HE MAY BE ON THE VERGE OF "SELLING OUT" TO THE U.S. WHILE HE HAS TEMPORARILY AT LEAST BLUNTED THESE ATTACKS, WE HAVE INTELLIGENCE THAT HE HOPES TO BE ABLE TO EXTRACT ADDITIONAL INTERIM CONCESSIONS FROM THE SECRETARY WHICH HE CAN ANNOUNCE. HE ALSO SEEKS TO OBTAIN COMMITMENTS ON TREATY POINTS IN PRIVATE TALKS WITH THE SECRETARY. TORRIJOS HAS GREAT FAITH IN PERSONAL, PRIVATE MEETINGS AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL. IN FACT HE SEEMS SO PERSUADED THAT IF HE CAN JUST GET THE SECRETARY AWAY FROM HIS ADVISORS, HE (TORRIJOS) WILL BE ABLE TO OBTAIN COMMITMENTS, THAT HE INITIALLY REFUSED
SECRET
SECRET

PAGE 03 PANAMA 00766 062310Z

TO INCLUDE EVEN AN AIDE TO THE SECRETARY IN THE TALKS. HE RELENTED ONLY WHEN WE INSISTED THAT THE SECRETARY AT LEAST HAD TO HAVE AN ASSISTANT TO MAKE A RECORD. UNFORTUNATELY, TORRIJOS' INEXPERIENCE, LACK OF STAFF WORK AND SPONTANEOUS MODE OF OPERATION ARE NOT CONDUCIVE TO EFFECTIVE AND STRUCTURED PROGRESS. TORRIJOS HAS ALSO BEEN OVERLY SENSITIVE ON CHARGES BY OPPOSITION AND EVEN HIS SUPPORTERS THAT HE IS BEING TOO FRIENDLY WITH U.S. HE HAS RESISTED BEING SEEN WITH U.S. OFFICIALS OTHER THAN SECRETARY AND UNTIL LAST MINUTE RESISTED HAVING ANY OTHER U.S. OFFICIAL IN HIS CAR BUT SECRETARY.

OUR EFFORTS WORK OUT TIME FOR SECRETARY TO GREET
EMBASSY STAFF FAILED WHEN TORRIJOS REFUSED TO STOP BY
EMBASSY ENROUTE TO AIRPORT.
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